



OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Frank H. Murkowski, Governor

November 2004

The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (Commerce), in partnership with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), is currently soliciting proposals for rural visitor industry product development projects. The aim of our 18-month pilot project is to select a limited number of communities located throughout Alaska that are interested in strengthening and diversifying their economic base through tourism development. This project will:

- Provide existing or start-up tourism businesses with additional knowledge and skill sets to increase their business proficiency (i.e. workshops in marketing, customer service, sales, administration, etc) thus, translating into increased sales and profitability;
- Provide technical assistance in developing business or marketing plans, packaging attractions, and developing tours and itineraries;
- Assist communities with preliminary work in developing a feasibility or marketing plan for a regional tourism attraction or product and finding resources to develop it;
- Provide regional tourism marketing assistance (i.e. design of a regional website, brochures, maps, etc.);
- Help spur private investment and tourism employment opportunities in rural Alaska.

To nominate a project, please complete the accompanying project information and outline, along with a narrative (2 to 5 pages) and return them to our office no later than 5:00 p.m. November 12, 2004. Provide as many of the items in the narrative outline as you can, recognizing that all the information might not be available. We envision successful projects will focus on a sub-regional level, involving two to 6 communities perhaps, rather than a region as broad as, say, "Southeast Alaska". While limited time and resources necessitate the selection of a few regional projects, it is our sincere hope that this will provide models and partnerships to apply in other regions in the future.

We expect to have all of the approvals in place for EDA funding by December 1. In the meantime we want to be ready to go with the projects. If you have any specific questions about the product development project, please contact

Odin Brudie (465-5466) odin_brudie@commerce.state.ak.us, or
Dru Garson (465-2162) dru_garson@commerce.state.ak.us.

Overview

The Alaska Rural Visitor Industry Product Development project represents an 18-month partnership between the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (Commerce), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), and regional economic development organizations. Project goals are to establish and market products or activities that will strengthen the visitor industry in the local and regional economies. The focus of this project is on groups of rural communities rather than individual communities, wherein a stronger destination can be created through partnerships and by linking attractions. Over the next eighteen months we'll be targeting *selected* projects identified as high potential tourism opportunities likely to increase employment and public and private sector investment in the Alaska visitor industry in the near term.

Goal(s)

- To maximize locally identified tourism development opportunities through public-private partnerships and business skill development.
- To provide maximum economic benefit through tourism development efforts that will benefit *multiple* communities within a given region.
- To help *selected* communities realize short-term tourism development goals through targeted technical assistance.
- To help *selected* communities identify and secure potential funding sources to achieve their long-term tourism development goals.

Program Timeline

December 1, 2004 – May 30, 2006

Benefits

This project does not include direct financial grants between the State and successful participants. However, this is a unique opportunity to form strategic partnerships among agencies, development organizations, and contractors to help a limited number of recognized visitor industry opportunities become reality. To accomplish this, these and other services could be provided under this project:

- Training & customized workshops – (i.e. AlaskaHost customer service, training in insurance and legal aspects of starting and operating a business, Internet marketing, etc);
- Website development - hands on training and assistance;
- Business and marketing plan assistance;
- Grant writing assistance and funding strategy development;
- Specialized assistance in branding and packaging activities and attractions;
- Permitting assistance;
- Collateral material development – (i.e. brochures, etc.);
- Market research

Project Information and Outline

If you wish to participate in this effort, please send us a 2-5 page narrative with the following information by Friday November 12, 2004:

Name of Applicant _____

Name(s) of Community(ies) _____
To benefit

Title of Project _____

Contact Person _____

Mailing Address _____

E-mail Address _____

Telephone & Fax numbers _____

Narrative

- 1) **Project Description:** What is the project? Who is involved? Where will it be located? Identify specific goals, objectives and expected outcomes. What specific attractions or products will be involved (i.e. Native arts and crafts, eco-lodge, wildlife viewing/ birding festivals, marketing historic or cultural themes)
- 2) **Project Readiness:** Summarize efforts taken to date. If the project entails a public/private partnership, describe the arrangement, including how the public investment will be secured. When will you be ready to start? How long will the project take to accomplish? Identify any needed feasibility, marketing, or other plans/studies and their status. If completed, attach a copy of the pages pertaining to this project.
- 3) **Project Impact:** What are the anticipated outcomes of the tourism project? How will the project improve the community's economy in a significant and long lasting way? How will it benefit residents? Does it support expansion of an existing business or create new business? How many part-time or full-time jobs will this project create/retain? Will the project support local hire? How many businesses will be affected by the project and how? Will the project bring a larger project to "funding ready" condition?
- 4) **Community & Other Support:** Describe actions that indicate active community support for this project. Is there sufficient local involvement with the project? What resources can communities and stakeholders "pool" together to create a stronger visitor destination? Provide documentation of any formal actions taken (for example: resolutions adopted, survey results, letters of endorsement). Discuss and document any other support (for example: agencies, businesses, etc.) Is the project identified in a community plan? If yes, provide documentation. How will this project help implement the plan?

For additional information contact: Odin Brudie – 907-465-5466

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